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Page 14, AMERICAN FREE PRESS * January 2 & 9, 2012 * Issue 1/2 *
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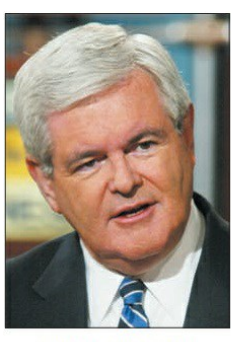
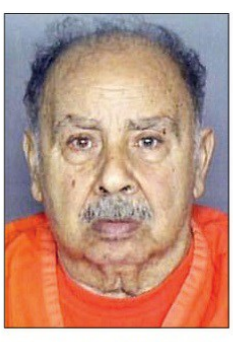

NEWT GINGRICH

MARIANNE GINGRICH


SARKIS SOGHANALIAN

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Bribery Scandal Almost Nabbed Newt

By Michael Collins Piper

In 1997, hardworking FBI agents in Miami were on the verge (they thought) of snaring then- House Speaker Newt Gingrich and his second wife, Marianne, in a $10 million bribery scandal involving multiple ties to key elements of the Israeli lobby in Washington. However, then-FBI Director Louis Freeh stepped in, and the impending sting was called off.

This revelation appeared on page A-2 of *The Washington Post* on Dec. 15, but it has not been mentioned in *The New York Times* or been given any play in the major broadcast media.

While the *Post* downplayed the Israeli connection, a limited rendition of the story in one brief UPI report — published in only a few newspapers — never mentioned the underlying pivotal, in-depth role of Israeli-linked intermediaries in the matter.

Instead, the reports focused on international arms dealer Sarkis Soghanalian's ties to the affair, leading many readers to think Gingrich was involved in arms trafficking. In reality, it was the arms dealer, a longtime FBI informant, who was acting on behalf of the FBI in the effort to nab Gingrich.

The *Post* story was based on a far more detailed and revealing exposition of some 6,400 words by veteran intelligence correspondent Joe Trento, published on his website at dcbureau.org.

The entire scenario is complex, reflecting events taking place over several years time. But the bottom line is that Gingrich and his wife were allegedly attempting to shake down Soghanalian for a $10 million bribe and that, from the beginning, operatives for Israel were on the scene, acting as middlemen for the Gingrich duo.

Mrs. Gingrich first made a connection to Soghanalian through her position as a former paid pitchwoman for the Israel Export Development Corporation (IEDC) — a front for a group of Jewish billionaires eager to promote Israeli exports into the United States. Behind IEDC were such big names as Larry Silverstein, owner of the World Trade Center at the time of the 9-11 attacks; Sy Syms of the SYMS clothing chain; and Lawrence Tisch, who controls the CBS media empire.

Soghanalian said he was first approached by Morty Bennett of Miami, who told the arms dealer he had a business associate who had an "in" with Mrs. Gingrich and that it might be possible to use that connection on Soghanalian's behalf.

Knowing U.S. sanctions on Saddam Hussein's Iraq were preventing the arms dealer from collecting a legal debt of $54million owed to him by Iraq, Bennett told Soghanalian that Mrs. Gingrich could help arrange — through her husband, then the speaker of the House — the lifting of the U.S. embargo so the arms dealer could secure his debt.

Bennett's associate, Howard Ash — who had worked with Mrs. Gingrich at IEDC — was a major fundraiser for the Institute for Advanced Strategic and Political Studies (IASPS), a Jerusalem-based think tank headed by Robert Loewenberg, who Mrs. Gingrich has described as a "friend." IASPS also included another close Gingrich friend, former Rep. Vin Weber (R-Minn.), among its "trustees" — a relationship Weber now formally denies.

Following the contact from Bennett, Soghanalian — a longtime FBI informant who had worked closely with Richard Gregorie, the assistant U.S. attorney in Miami — reported the overtures from Mrs. Gingrich's IEDC-IASPS associates to the FBI. The FBI expressed interest, urging Soghanalian to maintain contact with the group.

Shortly thereafter, Mrs. Gingrich visited Paris — under the auspices of IEDC and at the urging of Loewenberg — in the company of Bennett and Ash, where she met Soghanalian.

Mrs. Gingrich now claims she was soliciting a donation to IEDC from Soghanalian. However, Soghanalian told the FBI that Mrs. Gingrich told him in Paris that she could use her husband's influence to get the Iraqi embargo lifted in return for "an understanding."

Sometime later, Bennett came back to the arms dealer, saying Mrs. Gingrich wanted $10million to get the job done.

Soghanalian was told $5 million was for Mrs. Gingrich; another $1 million was for Bennett. The recipients of the remaining $4 million were not named, but those who know how Capitol Hill bribery works presume this money would be used to help "grease the wheels" among other members of Congress who would help Gingrich expedite the operation.

Soghanalian told the FBI he was instructed the bribe was to be paid to the Washington office of IASPS, which would, in turn, launder the money to the Gingriches.

The IEDC-IASPS connection recurs throughout the scenario. Not only did another IEDC associate of Mrs. Gingrich, attorney David Yerushalmi, serve as counsel for both IEDC and IASPS, but both organizations also shared a number of employees and mutual funding sources.*

The FBI insisted it was vital that Soghanalian seal the deal directly with Mrs. Gingrich or her husband. This would clinch the criminal case against them.

As directed by the FBI, Soghanalian insisted he would not make the "donation" to the IASPS — the bribe intended for Gingrich — until he could meet Gingrich and his wife in private.

Pressured by Soghanalian, Ash told the arms dealer the House speaker would send "his own man" to Miami to meet with Soghanalian to facilitate arrangements for the meeting.

Gingrich's "own man" was Ben Waldman. Closely tied to Netanyahu circles in Israel, Waldman — an associate of both televangelist Pat Robertson and the infamously corrupt pro-Israel Washington lobbyist Jack Abramoff —had been Ronald Reagan's liaison to the Jewish community. But at the time of the bribery conspiracy, Waldman was chief fundraiser for the IASPS.

Finally, with everything in place, the FBI set the trap for Gingrich. A lavish reception was scheduled for June 8, 1997 in Miami at a luxury home, which had actually been rented by the FBI for the sting. Soghanalian was supposed to meet Gingrich there and solidify the deal under FBI electronic surveillance.

However, at the last minute, FBI Director Louis Freeh sent down the order that Soghanalian was not to attend the event — which Gingrich did attend — and the two-year-long investigation was brought to an abrupt end just when the FBI might have caught Gingrich agreeing to accept the payoff.

Journalist Trento quoted one FBI agent, who said:"We got so close, and when the target was in sight, we were stopped by Washington."

In fact, both assistant U.S. attorney in Miami Richard Gregorie and the FBI's Miami attorney, Martin King, had wanted to pursue the investigation to the end, only to be frustrated by the FBI director.

Soghanalian has since died. Bennett, Ash and Waldman — and Mrs. Gingrich — all dismiss the reported events as a tissue of lies. Gingrich has yet to comment. FBI officials now assert there was never any evidence Gingrich was aware a bribery conspiracy was under way.

* Considering the revelations from the Gingrich bribery allegations, it does not seem a coincidence that longtime Gingrich associate Yerushalmi is today the driving force behind the ongoing, well-financed national Muslim-bashing campaign focusing on the danger Islamic law — sharia — supposedly poses to America. In fact, *The New York Times* reported on Dec. 21 that "long before he announced his presidential run . . . Newt Gingrich had become the most prominent American politician to embrace an alarming premise: that sharia, or Islamic law, poses a threat to the United States as grave [as], or graver than, terrorism." The Times, however, did not mention the bribery scandal, its links to IEDC and IASPS, or even Yerushalmi, although it did point out that Gingrich and his ex-mistress — now his third wife — have produced a Muslim-bashing film.

Michael Collins Piper can now be heard on the Internet at michaelcollinspiper.podbean.com. He is the author of ***Final Judgment***, the controversial "underground bestseller" documenting the collaboration of Israeli intelligence in the assassination of John F. Kennedy. He is also the author of ***The High Priests of War***, ***The New Jerusalem: Zionist Power in America*** , ***The Judas Goats: The Enemy Within***, ***Dirty Secrets: Crime, Conspiracy & Cover-Up in the 20th Century***, ***The GOLEM: Israel's Hell Bomb***, and ***Target: Traficant.*** These works can be found at America First Books and First Amendment Books: 1-888-699-NEWS. He has lectured on suppressed topics in places as diverse as Malaysia, Japan, Canada, Russia and Abu Dhabi.

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